

**MOST COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED BY NON-MUSLIMS
WHO HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAAM**

BY

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1. PRESENT QUR'AN IS NOT THE ORIGINAL BUT THAT OF USMAN (r.a.)

Question:

There were many versions of the Qur'an all of which were burnt by Usman (r.a.) except for one. Therefore is it not true that the present Qur'an is the one compiled by Usman (r.a.) and not the original revelation of God?

Answer:

One of the most common myths about the Qur'an, is that Usman (r.a.), the third Caliph of Islam authenticated and compiled one Qur'an, from a large set of mutually contradicting copies. The Qur'an, revered as the Word of Allah (swt) by Muslims the world over, is the same Qur'an as the one revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It was authenticated and written under his personal supervision. We will examine the roots of the myth which says that Usman (r.a.) had the Qur'an authenticated.

1. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself supervised and authenticated the written texts of the Qur'an

Whenever the Prophet received a revelation, he would first memorize it himself and later declare the revelation and instruct his Companions (R.A. – Radhi Allahu Taala Anhu) – May Allah be pleased with him who would also memorize it. The Prophet would immediately ask the scribes to write down the revelation he had received, and he would reconfirm and recheck it himself. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was an Ummi who could not read and write. Therefore, after receiving each revelation, he would repeat it to his Companions. They would write down the revelation, and he would recheck by asking them to read what they had written. If there was any mistake, the Prophet would immediately point it out and have it corrected and rechecked. Similarly he would even recheck and authenticate the portions of the Qur'an memorized by the Companions. In this way, the complete Qur'an was written down under the personal supervision of the prophet (pbuh).

2. Order and sequence of Qur'an divinely inspired

The complete Qur'an was revealed over a period of 22½ years portion by portion, as and when it was required. The Qur'an was not compiled by the Prophet in the chronological order of revelation. The order and sequence of the Qur'an too was Divinely inspired and was instructed to the Prophet by Allah (swt) through archangel Jibrael. Whenever a revelation was conveyed to his companions, the Prophet would also mention in which surah (chapter) and after which ayat (verse) this new revelation should fit.

Every Ramadhan all the portions of the Qur'an that had been revealed, including the order of the verses, were revised and reconfirmed by the Prophet with archangel Jibrael. During the last Ramadhan, before the demise of the Prophet, the Qur'an was rechecked and reconfirmed twice.

It is therefore clearly evident that the Qur'an was compiled and authenticated by the Prophet himself during his lifetime, both in the written form as well as in the memory of several of his Companions.

3. Qur'an copied on one common material

The complete Qur'an, along with the correct sequence of the verses, was present during the time of the Prophet (pbuh). The verses however, were written on separate pieces, scrapes of leather, thin flat stones, leaflets, palm branches, shoulder blades, etc. After the demise of the prophet, Abu Bakr (r.a.), the first caliph of Islam ordered that the Qur'an be copied from the various different materials on to a common material and place, which was in the shape of sheets. These were tied with strings so that nothing of the compilation was lost.

4. Usman (r.a.) made copies of the Qur'an from the original manuscript

Many Companions of the Prophet used to write down the revelation of the Qur'an on their own whenever they heard it from the lips of the Prophet. However what they wrote was not personally verified by the Prophet and thus could contain mistakes. All the verses revealed to the Prophet may not have been heard personally by all the Companions. There were high possibilities of different portions of the Qur'an being missed by different Companions. This gave rise to disputes among Muslims regarding the different contents of the Qur'an during the period of the third Caliph Usman (r.a.).

Usman (r.a.) borrowed the original manuscript of the Qur'an, which was authorized by the beloved Prophet (pbuh), from Hafsha (may Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet's wife. Usman (r.a.) ordered four Companions who were among the scribes who wrote the Qur'an when the Prophet dictated it, led by Zaid bin Thabit (r.a.) to rewrite the script in several perfect copies. These were sent by Usman (r.a.) to the main centres of Muslims.

There were other personal collections of the portions of the Qur'an that people had with them. These might have been incomplete and with mistakes. Usman (r.a.) only appealed to the people to destroy all these copies which did not match the original manuscript of the Qur'an in order to preserve the original text of the Qur'an. Two such copies of the copied text of the original Qur'an authenticated by the Prophet are present to this day, one at the museum in Tashkent in erstwhile Soviet Union and the other at the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, Turkey.

5. Diacritical marks were added for non-Arabs

The original manuscript of the Qur'an does not have the signs indicating the vowels in Arabic script. These vowels are known as tashkil, zabar, zair, paish in Urdu and as fatah, damma and qasra in Arabic. The Arabs did not require the vowel signs and diacritical marks for correct pronunciation of the Qur'an since it was their mother tongue. For Muslims of non-Arab origin, however, it was difficult to recite the Qur'an correctly without the vowels. These marks were introduced into the Quranic script during the time of the fifth 'Umayyad' Caliph, Malik-ar-Marwan (66-86 Hijri/685-705 C.E.) and during the governorship of Al-Hajaj in Iraq.

Some people argue that the present copy of the Qur'an that we have along with the vowels and the diacritical marks is not the same original Qur'an that was present at the Prophet's time. But they fail to realize that the word 'Qur'an' means a recitation. Therefore, the preservation of the recitation of the Qur'an is important, irrespective of whether the script is different or whether it contains vowels. If the pronunciation and the Arabic is the same, naturally, the meaning remains the same too.

6. Allah Himself has promised to guard the Qur'an

Allah has promised in the Qur'an :

“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly Guard it (from corruption).”

[Al-Qur'an 15:9]

2. DOES ISLAM PROMOTE VIOLENCE?

Question:

Doesn't Islam promote violence, bloodshed and brutality since the Qur'an says that Muslims should kill the kuffar where ever they find them?

Answer:

A few selected verses from the Qur'an are often misquoted to perpetuate the myth that Islam promotes violence, and exhorts its followers to kill those outside the pale of Islam.

1. Verse from Surah Taubah

The following verse from Surah Taubah is very often quoted by critics of Islam, to show that Islam promotes violence, bloodshed and brutality:

“Kill the mushriqeen (pagans, polytheists, kuffar) where ever you find them.”

[Al-Qur'an 9:5]

2. Context of verse is during battlefield

Critics of Islam actually quote this verse out of context. In order to understand the context, we need to read from verse 1 of this surah. It says that there was a peace treaty between the Muslims and the Mushriqs (pagans) of Makkah. This treaty was violated by the Mushriqs of Makkah. A period of four months was given to the Mushriqs of Makkah to make amends. Otherwise war would be declared against them. Verse 5 of Surah Taubah says:

“But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is oft-forgiving, Most merciful.”[Al-Qur'an 9:5]

This verse is quoted during a battle.

3. Example of war between America and Vietnam

We know that America was once at war with Vietnam. Suppose the President of America or the General of the American Army told the American soldiers during the war: “Wherever you find the Vietnamese, kill them”. Today if I say that the American President said, “Wherever you find Vietnamese, kill them” without giving the context, I will make him sound like a butcher. But if I quote him in context, that he said it during a war, it will sound very logical, as he was trying to boost the morale of the American soldiers during the war.

4. Verse 9:5 quoted to boost morale of Muslims during battle

Similarly in Surah Taubah chapter 9 verse 5 the Qur’an says, “Kill the Mushriqs where ever you find them”, during a battle to boost the morale of the Muslim soldiers. What the Qur’an is telling Muslim soldiers is, don’t be afraid during battle; wherever you find the enemies kill them.

5. Shourie jumps from verse 5 to verse 7

Arun Shourie is one of the staunchest critics of Islam in India. He quotes the same verse, Surah Taubah chapter 9 verse 5 in his book ‘The World of Fatwahs’, on page 572. After quoting verse 5 he jumps to verse 7 of Surah Taubah. Any sensible person will realise that he has skipped verse 6.

6. Surah Taubah chapter 9 verse 6 gives the answer

Surah Taubah chapter 9 verse 6 gives the answer to the allegation that Islam promotes violence, brutality and bloodshed. It says:

“If one amongst the pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allah; and then escort him to where he can be secure that is because they are men without knowledge.”

[Al-Qur’an 9:6]

The Qur’an not only says that a Mushriq seeking asylum during the battle should be granted refuge, but also that he should be escorted to a secure place. In the present international scenario, even a kind, peace-loving army General, during a battle, may let the enemy soldiers go free, if they want peace. But which army General will ever tell his soldiers, that if the enemy soldiers want peace during a battle, don’t just let them go free, but also escort them to a place of security?

This is exactly what Allah (swt) says in the Glorious Qur’an to promote peace in the world.

3. QUR’AN USES ‘WE’ FOR ALLAH

Question:

Does Islam believe in several gods because the Qur’an uses the word ‘We’ when God speaks in the Qur’an?

Answer:

Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion. It believes in and adheres to uncompromising monotheism. It believes that God is one, and unique in His attributes. In the Qur'an, God often refers to Himself using the word 'We'. But this does not mean that Islam believes in the existence of more than one God.

Two types of plural

In several languages, there are two types of plurals, one is a plural of numbers to refer to something that occurs in a quantity of more than one. The other plural is a plural of respect.

- a. In the English language, the Queen of England refers to herself as 'We' instead of 'I'. This is known as the 'royal plural'.
- b. Rajiv Gandhi, the ex-Prime Minister of India used to say in Hindi "Hum dekhna chahte hain". "We want to see." 'Hum' means 'We' which is again a royal plural in Hindi.
- c. Similarly in Arabic, when Allah refers to Himself in the Qur'an, He often uses Arabic word 'Nahnu' meaning 'We'. It does not indicate plural of number but plural of respect.

Tawheed or monotheism is one of the pillars of Islam. The existence and uniqueness of one and only one God is mentioned several times in the Qur'an. For instance in Surah Ikhlas, it says :

"Say He is Allah the One and Only."

[Al-Qur'an 112: 1]

4. THE THEORY OF ABROGATION

Question:

Muslims believe in the theory of abrogation, i.e. they believe that certain earlier verses of the Qur'an were abrogated by verses revealed later. Does this imply that God made a mistake and later on corrected it?

Answer:

1. Two different interpretations

The Glorious Qur'an says in the following verse:

"None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things?"

[Al-Qur'an 2:106]

A reference to this is also made in chapter 16 verse 101 of Surah Nahl. The Arabic word mentioned is ayat which means 'signs' or 'verses' and which can also mean 'revelations'. This verse of the Qur'an can be interpreted in two different ways:

- a. The revelations that are abrogated are those revelations that were revealed before the Qur'an, for example the Torah, the Zaboor and the Injeel.

Here Allah (swt) says that He does not cause the previous revelations to be forgotten but He substitutes them with something better or similar, indicating that the Torah, the Zaboor and the Injeel were substituted by the Qur'an.

b. If we consider that the Arabic word ayat in the above verse refers to the verses of the Qur'an, and not previous revelations, then it indicates that none of the verses of the Qur'an are abrogated by Allah but substituted with something better or similar. This means that certain verses of the Qur'an, that were revealed earlier were substituted by verses that were revealed later. I agree with both the interpretations.

Many Muslims and non-Muslims misunderstand the second interpretation to mean that some of the earlier verses of the Qur'an were abrogated and no longer hold true for us today, as they have been replaced by the later verses of the Qur'an or the abrogating verses. This group of people even wrongly believe that these verses contradict each other.

Let us analyze a few such examples.

2. Produce a recital like the Qur'an / 10 Surahs / 1 Surah:

Some pagan Arabs alleged that the Qur'an was forged by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Allah (swt) challenges these Arabs in the following verse of Surah Al-Isra:

“Say: If the whole of Mankind and Jinns were together to produce the like of this Qur'an they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.”
[Al-Qur'an 17:88]

Later the challenge was made easy in the following verse of Surah Al-Hud:

“Or they may say, “He forged it.” Say, “Bring ye then ten Surahs forged, like unto it, and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than Allah, if ye speak the truth!’. ”
[Al-Qur'an 11:13]

It was made easier in the following verse of Surah Yunus:

“Or do they say, “He forged it”? Say: “Bring then a Surah like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can, besides Allah, if it be ye speak the truth!’. ”
[Al-Qur'an 10:38]

Finally in Surah Al-Baqarah, Allah (swt) further simplified the challenge:

And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah if your (doubts) are true.

But if ye cannot – and of a surety ye cannot – then fear the Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones – which is prepared for those who reject faith”.
[Al-Qur'an 2:23-24]

Thus Allah (swt) made the challenges progressively easier. The progressively revealed verses of the Qur'an first challenged the pagans to produce a book like the Qur'an, then challenged them to produce ten Surahs (chapters) like those in the Qur'an, then one Surah and finally it challenges them to produce one Surah somewhat similar (mim mislihi) to the Qur'anic Surahs. This does not mean that the later verses that were revealed i.e. of Surah Baqarah chapter 2 verses 23 and 24 contradict the earlier three verses. Contradiction implies mentioning two things that cannot be possible simultaneously, or cannot take place simultaneously.

The earlier verses of the Qur'an i.e. the abrogated verses are still the word of God and the information contained in it is true to this day. For instance the challenge to produce a recital like the Qur'an stands to this day. Similarly the challenge to produce ten Surahs and one Surah exactly like the Qur'an also holds true and the last challenge of producing one surah somewhat similar to the Qur'an also holds true. It does not contradict the earlier challenges, but this is the easiest of all the challenges posed by the Qur'an. If the last challenge cannot be fulfilled, the question of anyone fulfilling the other three more difficult challenges does not arise.

Suppose I speak about a person that he is so dumb, that he would not be able to pass the 10th standard in school. Later I say that he would not be able to pass the 5th standard, and further say that he would not be able to pass even the 1st standard. Finally I say that he is so dull that he would not even be able to pass K.G. i.e. kindergarten. One has to pass kindergarten before one can be admitted to school. What I am stating is that the person is so dull as to be unable to pass even kindergarten. My four statements do not contradict each other, but my last statement i.e. the person would not be able to pass the kindergarten is sufficient to indicate the intelligence of that person. If a person cannot even pass kindergarten, the question of him passing the first standard or 5th or 10th, does not arise.

3. Gradual prohibition of intoxicants

Another example of such verses is that related to gradual prohibition of intoxicants. The first revelation of the Qur'an to deal with intoxicants was the following verse from Surah Baqarah:

“They ask thee concerning wine and gambling say: ‘In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit’.”

[Al-Qur'an 2:219]

The next verse to be revealed regarding intoxicants is the following verse from Surah Nisa:

“O ye who believe! approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say” [Al-Qur'an 4:43]

The last verse to be revealed regarding intoxicants was the following verse from Surah Al-Maidah:

“O ye who believe! intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination of Satan's handiwork; eschew such (abomination), that ye may

prosper.”

[Al-Qur'an 5:90]

The Qur'an was revealed over a period of 22½ years. Many reforms that were brought about in the society were gradual. This was to facilitate the adoption of new laws by the people. An abrupt change in society always leads to rebellion and anarchy.

The prohibition of intoxicants was revealed in three stages. The first revelation only mentioned that in the intoxicants there is great sin and some profit but the sin is greater than the profit. The next revelation prohibited praying in an intoxicated state, indicating that one should not consume intoxicants during the day, since a Muslim has to pray five times a day. This verse does state that when one is not praying at night one is allowed to consume intoxicants. It means one may have or one may not have. The Qur'an does not comment on it. If this verse had mentioned that one is allowed to have intoxicants while not praying then there would have been a contradiction. Allah (swt) chose words appropriately. Finally the total prohibition of intoxicants at all times was revealed in Surah Maidah chapter 5 verse 90.

This clearly indicates that the three verses do not contradict each other. Had they been contradicting, it would not have been possible to follow all the three verses simultaneously. Since a Muslim is expected to follow each and every verse of the Qur'an, only by following the last verse i.e. of Surah Maidah (5:90), he simultaneously agrees and follows the previous two verses.

Suppose I say that I do not live in Los Angeles. Later I say that I do not live in California. Finally I say, I do not live in the United States of America. This does not imply that these three statements contradict each other. Each statement gives more information than the previous statement. The third statement includes the information contained in the first two statements. Thus, only by saying that I do not live in the United States of America, it is obvious, that I also do not live in California nor New York. Similarly since consuming alcohol is totally prohibited, it is obvious that praying in an intoxicated state is also prohibited and the information that in intoxicants is “great sin and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than profit” also holds true.

4. Qur'an does not contain any contradictions

The theory of abrogation does not imply that there is a contradiction in the Qur'an, since it is possible to follow all the verses of the Qur'an at the same time.

If there is a contradiction in the Qur'an, then it cannot be the word of Allah (swt).

“Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy (contradictions).”

[Al-Qur'an 4:82]

5. MEANING OF ALIF LAAM MEEM

Question:

Why do certain Surahs in the Qur'an begin with Alif Laam Meem, Haa Meem, Yaa Seen. What is the significance of such terms or phrases?

Answer:

1. Abbreviated Letters

Alif Laam Meem, Ya Seen, Ha Meem', etc. are known as Al-Muqattaat i.e. the abbreviated letters. There are 29 letters in the Arabic Alphabet (if hamza and alif are considered as two letters) and there are 29 surahs i.e. chapters in the Glorious Qur'an that have the abbreviated letters prefixed to them. These abbreviated letters some times occur alone, sometimes in a combination of two letters and sometimes in a combination of three, four or five letters.

a. Three surahs are pre-fixed with only one letter:

- (i) Surah Sad chapter 38 with Sad
- (ii) Surah Qaf chapter 50 with Qaf
- (iii) Surah Nun or Qalam chapter 68 with Nun

b. The combination of two letters occurs in 10 surahs:

Three of them occur only once each:

- (i) Surah Ta Ha chapter 20 has Ta Ha
- (ii) Surah Al Namal starting with chapter 27 has Ta Seen
- (iii) Surah Ya Seen chapter 36 has Ya Seen

Ha Meem occurs in seven consecutive Surahs from Surah 40 to Surah 46:

- (i) Surah Ghafir or Al-Mu'min chapter 40
- (ii) Surah Fussilat or Ha Meem chapter 41
- (iii) Surah Al Shura chapter 42
- (iv) Surah Al Zukhruf chapter 43
- (v) Surah Al Dukhan chapter 44
- (vi) Surah Al Jathiyah chapter 45
- (vii) Surah Al Ahqaf chapter 46

c. There are three combinations of three letters each occurring in 14 surahs.

Alif Laam Meem occurs in six surahs

- (i) Surah Al Baqarah chapter 2
- (ii) Surah Ali 'Imran chapter 3
- (iii) Surah Al 'Ankabut chapter 29
- (iv) Surah Al Rum chapter 30

- (v) Surah Luqman chapter 31
- (vi) Surah Al Sajdah chapter 32

Alif Laam Ra occurs in six consecutive surahs: Surah 10 to Surah 15:

- (i) Surah Yunus chapter 10
- (ii) Surah Hud chapter 11
- (iii) Surah Yusuf chapter 12
- (iv) Surah Al Rad chapter 13
- (v) Surah Ibrahim chapter 14
- (vi) Surah Al Hijr chapter 15

Ta Seen Meem occurs in two Surahs:

- (i) Surah Al-Shura chapter 26
- (ii) Surah Al-Qasas chapter 28

d. Combination of four letters occurs twice:

- (i) Surah Aaraf chapter 7: Alif Laam Meem Sad
- (ii) Surah Anfal chapter 8: Alif Laam Meem Ra

e. Combination of five letters occurs twice:

- (i) Surah Maryam chapter 19 begins with Kaf Ha Ya Ayn Sad
- (ii) Surah Al-Shura chapter 42 begins with Ha Meem Ayn Seen Qaf

Surah Al-Shura chapter 42 has a double combination of abbreviated letters one set of two letters followed by one set of three letters.

2. Meanings of these abbreviated letters

The meaning and purpose of these letters is uncertain. There have been a variety of explanations offered by Muslim scholars through the ages. A few among them are:

- i. These letters might be abbreviations for certain sentences and words for instance, Alif Laam Meem means Ana-Alahu -a'Laam or Nun meaning Noor (light), etc.
- ii. These letters are not abbreviations but symbols and names of Allah or something else.
- iii. These letters were used for rhyming.
- iv. These letters have some numerical significance as the semitic letters also have numerical values.
- v. These letters were used to attract the attention of the Prophet (and later his audience).

Several volumes have been written on the significance of these abbreviations.

3. Best explanation of abbreviated letters:

Of all the explanations given by various scholars, the one which is authentic and also supported by Tafsir of Ibne-Kathir, Zamakshari and Ibne-Taiymiyah is the following:

The human body is composed of various fundamental elements that are found in nature. Clay and dust are composed of the same fundamental elements. Yet it would be absurd to say that a human being is exactly the same as the dust.

We can all have access to the elements that are found in the human body, and add a few gallons of water, which is the constitution of the human body. We know the elements in the human body and yet we are at a loss when asked the secret of life.

Similarly the Qur'an addresses those people who reject its Divine authority. It tells them that this Qur'an, is in your own language, and over which the Arabs took pride. It is composed of the same letters that the Arabs used to express themselves most eloquently.

The Arabs were very proud of their language and Arabic was at its peak when the Qur'an was revealed. With the letters Alif Laam Meem, Yaa Seen, Ha-Meem, etc., (in English we would say A, B, C, D) the Qur'an challenges mankind to produce a Surah at least somewhat similar to the Qur'an in beauty and elegance, if they doubt its authenticity.

Initially, the Qur'an challenges all the men and jinn to produce a recital like the Qur'an and adds that they would not be able to do it even if they backed each other. This challenge is mentioned in Surah Isra chapter 17 verse 88 and in Surah Tur chapter 52 verse 34.

Later the Qur'an repeats the challenge in Surah Hud chapter 11 verse 13 by saying produce ten surahs like it and later in Surah Yunus chapter 10 verse 38 produce one surah like it and finally the easiest challenge is given in Surah Al-Baqarah chapter 2 verses 23 and 24.

“And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah if your doubts are true.

But if ye cannot – and of a surety ye cannot – then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones – which is prepared for those who reject faith.”

[Al-Qur'an 2:23-24]

To compare the skill of two artisans, they must be given samples of the same raw material and their performance evaluated in performing the same task. If they are tailors they must be provided with the same fabrics. The raw materials of the Arabic language are these letters Alif Laam Meem, Ya Seen (in English it is A, B, C, D, etc.) The miraculous nature of the language of the Qur'an does not lie only in the fact that it is the Word of Allah, but also in the fact that although made up of the same letters in which the pagan Arabs took pride, it has not been rivalled.

The Arabs are noted for their rhetoric ability, eloquence and meaningful expression. Just as the constituents of the human body are known to us and can be obtained by us, the letters comprising the Qur'an, such as Alif Laam Meem are known to us, and used frequently to formulate words. Life cannot be created by us, even if we possess knowledge of the constituents of the human body. Similarly we cannot capture the same eloquence and beauty of expression

that we find in the Qur'an, despite knowing the letters that constitute the Qur'an. The Qur'an thus proves its Divine origin.

4. Miraculous quality of Qur'an mentioned immediately after these broken letters

Therefore immediately after these broken letters are mentioned in the Qur'an, the following verses speak about the miracle of the Qur'an, and its authority e.g. in Surah Baqarah Chapter 2 verse 1-2:

“Alif Laam Meem.

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.”

[Al-Qur'an 2:1-2]

6. DOES THE QUR'AN SAY THAT THE EARTH IS FLAT?

Question

Qur'an says that Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet. This gives an indication that the earth is flat. Does this not contradict established modern science?

Answer

1. Earth made as a carpet

The question refers to a verse from the Qur'an in Surah Nuh:

“And Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet (spread out).”

[Al-Qur'an 71:19]

But the sentence in the above verse is not complete. It continues in the next verse, explaining the previous verse. It says:

“That ye may go about therein, in spacious roads.”

[Al-Qur'an 71:20]

A similar message is repeated in Surah TaHa:

“He Who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels)....”

[Al-Qur'an 20:53]

The surface of the earth i.e. earth's crust is less than 30 miles in thickness and is very thin as compared to the radius of the earth which is about 3750 miles. The deeper layers of the earth are very hot, fluid and hostile to any form of life. The earth's crust is a solidified shell on which we can live. The Qur'an rightly refers to it like a carpet spread out, so that we can travel along its roads and paths.

2. Carpet can also be spread on other than an absolute flat surface

Not a single verse of the Qur'an says that the earth is flat. The Qur'an only compares the earth's crust with a carpet. Some people seem to think that carpet can only be put on an absolute flat surface. It is possible to spread a carpet on a large sphere such as the earth. It can easily be demonstrated by taking a huge model of the earth's globe covering it with a carpet.

Carpet is generally put on a surface, which is not very comfortable to walk on. The Qur'an describes the earth crust as a carpet, without which human beings would not be able to survive because of the hot, fluid and hostile environment beneath it. The Qur'an is thus not only logical, it is mentioning a scientific fact that was discovered by geologists centuries later.

3. Earth has been spread out

Similarly, the Qur'an says in several verses that the earth has been spread out.

“And We have spread out the (spacious) earth: how excellently We do spread out!”

[Al-Qur'an 51:48]

Similarly the Qur'an also mentions in several other verses that the earth is an expanse:

“Have We not made the earth as a wide expanse”

“And the mountains as pegs?”

[Al-Qur'an 78:6-7]

None of these verses of the Qur'an contain even the slightest implication that the earth is flat. It only indicates that the earth is spacious and the reason for this spaciousness of the earth is mentioned. The Glorious Qur'an says:

“O My servants who believe! truly, spacious is My Earth: therefore serve ye Me –(And Me alone)!”

[Al-Qur'an 29:56]

Therefore none can give the excuse, that he could not do good and was forced to do evil because of the surroundings and circumstances.

4. Earth is geospherical in shape

The Qur'an mentions the actual shape of the earth in the following verse:

“And we have made the earth egg shaped”.

[Al-Qur'an 79:30]

The Arabic word Dahaha means egg shaped. It also means an expanse. Dahaha is derived from Duhiya which specifically refers to the egg of an ostrich which is geospherical in shape, exactly like the shape of the earth.

Thus the Qur'an and modern established science are in perfect harmony.

7. DOES ONLY ALLAH KNOW THE SEX OF THE CHILD IN THE MOTHER'S WOMB?

Question:

The Qur'an says that only Allah knows the sex of the child in the womb of the mother but now science has advanced and we can easily determine the sex of the child in the womb by ultrasonography. Isn't this verse of the Qur'an conflicting with medical science?

Answer:

Allah is Omnipotent and Omniscient. Allah has granted knowledge of certain things to humankind. But Allah has knowledge of the seen as well as the unseen.

1. Allah has knowledge of all things

Many people believe that the Qur'an claims that Allah alone knows the sex of the child in the mother's womb. The Glorious Qur'an says:

“Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone). It is He who sends down Rain, and He who knows what is in the wombs....”

[Al-Qur'an 31:34]

A similar message is given in the following verse:

“Allah doth know what every female (womb) doth bear,

By how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or do exceed. Every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion.”

[Al-Qur'an 13:8]

2. Sex can be determined by Ultrasonography

Today science has advanced and we can easily determine the sex of the child in the womb of a pregnant mother, using ultrasonography.

3. The word 'sex' is not mentioned in the verse of the Qur'an

It is true that many translations and commentaries of this verse of the Glorious Qur'an say that only Allah knows the sex of the child in the mother's womb. If you read the Arabic text of this verse, there is no Arabic word corresponding to the English word 'sex'. In fact the Qur'an says the knowledge of what is in the womb is with Allah alone. Many commentators have misunderstood it to mean only Allah knows the sex of the child in the womb, which is a mistake.

4. No one besides Allah can determine the nature of the child

This verse does not refer to the sex of the child in the womb but it refers to, how the child in the mother's womb will be. How will his nature be? Will he be a blessing or a curse to his parents? Will he be a boon or a bane to the society? Will he be good or evil? Will he go to heaven or hell? The complete knowledge of all things is with Allah alone. No scientist in the world, no

matter how advanced his equipment, will ever be able to accurately determine the knowledge of these things about the child in the mother's womb.

8. HOOR:

Question:

According to the Qur'an when a man enters paradise, he will get hoor, i.e. beautiful maidens. What will a woman have when she enters paradise?

Answer:

1. Hoor mentioned in the Qur'an

The word hoor occurs in the Qur'an in no less than four different places:

(1) In Surah Dukhan chapter 44, verse 54

“Moreover, We shall join them to companions
With beautiful, big and lustrous eyes.”
[Al-Qur'an 44:54]

(2) In Surah Al-Tur chapter 52 verse 20

“...And We shall join them to companions, with beautiful,
big and lustrous eyes.”
[Al-Qur'an 52:20]

(3) In Surah Rahman chapter 55 verse 72

“Companions restrained (as to their glances), in goodly pavilions.”
[Al-Qur'an 55:72]

(4) In Surah Al-Waqiah chapter 56 verse 22

“And (there will be) companions with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes.”
[Al-Qur'an 56:22]

2. Hoor Translated as Beautiful Maidens

Many translators of the Qur'an have translated the word hoor as 'beautiful maidens' especially in the Urdu translations. If hoor means 'beautiful maidens' or girls, then they are meant only for the men. Hence, what will the women get if they enter Paradise?

3. Meaning of Hoor

The word hoor is actually the plural of ahwar (applicable to man) and of haura (applicable to woman) and signifies a person having eyes characterized by haur a special quality bestowed upon a good soul, male or female in paradise and it denotes the intense whiteness of the white part of the spiritual eye.

The Qur'an describes in several other verses that in paradise you will have azwaj which mean a pair or spouse or companion which means you will have spouses or companions pure and holy (mutaharratun means pure, holy).

“But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say: “Why, this is what we were fed with before”, for they are given things in similitude; and they have therein companions pure (and holy); and they abide therein (forever)”.
[Al-Qur'an 2:25]

“But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit to Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath – their eternal home; therein shall they have companions pure and holy: we shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening”. [Al-Qur'an 4:57]

Therefore the word hoor has no specific gender. Mohammad Asad has translated the word hoor as spouse and Abdullah Yusuf Ali as companion. Therefore according to some scholars a man in paradise will have a hoor that is a beautiful maiden with beautiful big and lustrous eyes and a woman in paradise will get a man with beautiful big and lustrous eyes.

4. Women will get something exceptional in Paradise

Many scholars say that in context, the word hoor used in the Qur'an refers only to ladies since gents are addressed. A reply that would be accepted by all types of people would rather be the answer given in the Hadith when a similar question was posed that if a man gets a hoor, a beautiful Maiden in Paradise, then what will the women get? The reply was that the women will get that which the heart has not desired for, the ear hasn't heard off and the eye hasn't seen, indicating that even the women will get something exceptional in Paradise.

9. IS THE HEART RESPONSIBLE FOR UNDERSTANDING?

Question:

The Qur'an says that Allah has put a seal on the hearts of the Kuffar and they will not believe. Science tells us today that the brain is responsible for understanding and believing and not the heart. Isn't the Qur'an contradicting Science?

Answer:

1. Allah has set a seal on the heart of the Kuffar

The Glorious Qur'an says:

“As to those who reject Faith it is the same to them
Whether thou warn them or do not warn them;
They will not believe.

“Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing and on their eyes is a veil
Great is the penalty they incur.”[Al-Qur'an 2:6-7]

2. The word qalb in Arabic means heart as well as intelligence

The Arabic word qalb used in these verses means the heart. It also means intelligence. Thus the above verses also mean that Allah has put a seal on the intelligence of the kuffaars (unbelievers) and they will not understand and believe.

3. In the Arabic language heart is also used as a centre of understanding

In the Arabic language the word 'heart' is also used to connote one's centre of understanding.

4. Several words used in English language whose literal meaning is different

Even in English language there are several words which are used to explain something, though the literal meaning of these words are different. Consider the following examples

a. Lunatic – Struck by the moon:

The word 'lunatic' literally means struck by the moon. Today people use the word lunatic for a person who is insane or mentally unstable. People very well know that a mad or a mentally unstable person is not struck by the moon. Yet even a medical doctor uses this word. This is normal in the evolution of a language.

b. Disaster – An evil star

The word 'disaster' literally means an evil star. Today the word disaster is used for a great or sudden misfortune or calamity. We know very well that a misfortune has nothing to do with an evil star.

c. Trivial – Three roads meet

The word 'trivial' literally means where three roads meet. Today the word 'trivial' is used for something of small nature or little importance. We know very well that if something is of small value it has nothing to do with where three roads meet.

d. Sunrise and Sunset

'Sunrise' literally means rising of the sun. Today when the word 'sunrise' is used most of the people know that the earth is rotating and is moving in relation to the sun. Most of us know that the sun does not rise during sunrise. However even an astronomer uses the word 'sunrise'. Similarly we know that during sunset, the sun does not actually set.

5. In the English language heart is the centre of love and emotion

In the English language heart means an organ in the body which pumps blood. The same word heart is also used for the centre of thought, love and emotion. Today we know that brain is the centre of thought, love and emotion. Yet while expressing emotions a person is likely to say "I love you from the bottom of my heart". Imagine a scientist telling his wife, "I love you from the bottom of my heart" and the wife replies, "Don't you even know the basics of science, that the

brain is responsible for the emotions and not the heart? In fact you should say I love you from the bottom of my brain.”

6. Arabs know that the word heart in Arabic is also used for centre of thought and understanding

No Arab will ever ask the question as to why Allah has sealed the hearts of the kafir because he knows that in this context it refers to the centre of thought, understanding and emotions.

10. ALLAH HAS SEALED THE HEART OF KUFFAR

Question:

If Allah has sealed the hearts of the Kuffar i.e. non-Muslims, then why are they to be blamed for not accepting Islam?

Answer:

1. Allah has sealed the hearts of those who are continuously bent on rejecting the truth

Allah (swt) mentions in Surah Al Baqarah chapter 2 verses 6 and 7

“As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them Whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.

Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).”

[Al-Qur'an 2:6-7]

These verses do not refer to common Kuffar who reject faith. The Arabic words used are al-lazina kafaroo, those who are bent on rejecting the truth. It will not make any difference to such people whether you warn them or not, they will not believe. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing and on their eyes is a veil. It is not because Allah has set a seal on their hearts that these kuffar do not understand and believe, but it is the vice-versa. It is because these kuffar are bent on rejecting the truth and whether you warn them or not they will not believe, that Allah has set a seal on their hearts. Therefore Allah is not to blame, but these kuffaar who are bent on rejecting the faith are responsible.

2. Example of teacher predicting a student will fail

Suppose an experienced teacher, before the final examinations, predicts that a particular student will fail in the exams, since the student is very mischievous, not attentive in class and does not do his homework. If after the student appears for the examination, he fails, who is to be blamed for the student failing: the teacher or the student? Just because the teacher predicted, it does not mean that the teacher is to be blamed but the student himself is responsible for his failure.

Similarly Allah (swt) knows in advance that there are some people who are bent on rejecting the faith and Allah has put a seal on their hearts. Thus these non-Muslims themselves are responsible for rejecting the faith and not Allah (swt).

11. HEAVENS AND EARTH CREATED IN SIX DAYS AND NOT EIGHT DAYS

Question:

The Qur'an mentions in several places that the heavens and the earth were created in 6 days but in Surah Fussilat it says that the heavens and the earth were created in 8 days. Isn't this a contradiction? The same verse also says that the earth was created in 6 days and then later on the heavens were created in 2 days. This is against the Big-Bang theory that the heavens and the earth were created simultaneously.

Answer:

1. Heavens and the Earth created in Six days

I do agree that the Qur'an says that the heavens and the earth were created in 6 days i.e. 6 epochs and it is mentioned in

Surah Al A'raf chapter 7 verse 54

Surah Yunus chapter 10 verse 3

Surah Hud chapter 11 verse 7

Surah Al Furqan chapter 25 verse 59

Surah Al Sajdah chapter 32 verse 4

Surah Qaf chapter 50 verse 38

Surah Al Hadid chapter 57 verse 4

The verses of the Qur'an which according to you say that the heavens and the earth were created in 8 days are Surah Fussilat chapter 41 verses 9 to 12

“Say: Is it that ye deny Him Who created the earth in two days? And do ye join equals With him? He is the Lord of (all) the Worlds;

He set on the (earth) mountains standing firm, High above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth, and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion, In four days, in accordance with (the needs of) Those who seek (sustenance).”

Moreover, He Comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as) smoke. He said to it and to the earth. “Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly. They said: “We do come (Together), in willing obedience.”

So He completed them as seven firmaments in two days and He assigned to each heaven its duty and command and We adorned the lower heaven with lights, and (provided it) with guard. Such is the decree of (Him) the exalted in might, full of knowledge.”

[Al-Qur'an 41:9-12]

On the face of it, it seems that these verses of the Qur'an give the initial impression that the heavens and the earth were created in 8 days.

Allah says in the beginning of this verse that those who exploit this information contained in this passage to raise doubts about its authenticity are equally interested in promulgating blasphemy and denying His unity. Allah is telling us that in course of time, there will emerge unbelievers who will make use of this apparent contradiction.

2. Summa means moreover

If you analyse these verses carefully, it speaks about 2 different creations: the earth and the heaven. The earth excluding the mountains was created in 2 days and the mountains were set on the earth standing firm and blessed and measured its sustenance in 4 days. Therefore the earth along with the mountains was created in 6 days according to verse 9 and 10. Verse 11 and 12 says, moreover the heavens were created in 2 days. The Arabic word used in the beginning of verse 11 of Surah Fussilat is summa which means; 'then' or 'moreover'. There are certain Qur'anic translations, which have, used 'then' for the word summa which, indicates 'afterwards'. If 'then' is wrongly used for summa then the total of the creation of heaven and earth will be 8 days which will conflict with other verses of the Qur'an which says heavens and earth were created in 6 days and will also conflict with the Big Bang Theory as well as the verse of the Qur'an Surah Al Ambiya chapter 21 verse 30 which says that heavens and the earth were created simultaneously.

Therefore the correct translation of the word summa in this verse would be 'moreover'. Abdullah Yusuf Ali has rightly translated the word summa or moreover which clearly gives an indication that while the earth along with the mountains, etc. was created in 6 days simultaneously the heavens were created in 2 days. Therefore the total does not come to 8 days but 6 days.

If a builder says that he will construct a 10 storey building and surrounding compound wall in 6 months and after completion of his project he gives a more detailed account saying that the basement of the building was built in 2 months and the 10 storeys took 4 months and simultaneously, while the basement and the building was being constructed, he also constructed the surrounding of the building along with the compound wall which took 2 months. Therefore both his first and second descriptions are not contradicting but the second statement gives a more detailed account for the construction.

3. Heavens and the Earth created simultaneously

The Qur'an describe the creation of the universe in several places, sometimes it says the heavens and the earth (7:54, 10:3, 11:7, 25:59, 32:4, 50:38, 57:4) while in other places it says earth and the heaven (49:9-12, 2:29, 20:4) thus further supplementing the verse of Surah Al Ambiya chapter 21 verse 30 which speaks about the Big-Bang and that the heavens and the earth were created simultaneously.

Similarly in Surah Al-Baqara chapter 2 verse 29

“It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Then He turned to the heaven and made them into seven firmaments. And of all things He hath perfect knowledge.”
[Al-Qur’an 2:29]

“It is who has created for you all things on the earth summa simultaneously made the heaven into seven firmaments”.

Here also if you wrongly translate summa as ‘then’ only then would this verse contradict the Big-bang theory and other verses of the Qur’an. Therefore the correct translation of the word summa is ‘moreover’ or ‘simultaneously’.

12. IS MAN CREATED FROM SPERM OR DUST?

Question:

At one place the Qur’an mentions that man is created from sperm and in another place it mentions that man is created from dust. Are these two verses not contradicting? How can you scientifically prove that man is created from dust?

Answer:

1. Man created from sperm and dust

The Qur’an refers to the lowly beginnings of a human being from a drop of sperm, in several verses including the following verse from Surah Al-Qiyamah:

“Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)”?
[Al-Qur’an 75:37]

The Qur’an also mentions in several places that human beings were created from dust. The following verse makes a reference to the origin of human beings:

“(Consider) that We created you out of dust”.
[Al-Qur’an 22:5]

We now know that all the elements present in the human body (i.e. the constituent elements of the human body), are all present in the earth in small or great quantities. This is the scientific explanation for the Qur’anic verse that says that man was created from dust.

In certain verses, the Qur’an says that man was created from sperm, while in certain other verses it says that man was created from dust. However this is not a contradiction. Contradiction means statements, which are opposite or conflicting and both cannot be true simultaneously.

2. Man created from water

In certain places the Qur’an also says that man was created from water. For instance in Surah Al-Furqan it says:

“It is He Who has created man from water”.

[Al-Qur'an 25:54]

Science has proved all the three statements to be correct. Man has been created from sperm, dust as well as water.

3. It is not a Contradiction but a Contradistinction

Suppose I say that in order to make a cup of tea one needs water. One also needs tea-leaves or tea powder. The two statements are not contradictory since both water and tea leaves are required in order to make a cup of tea. Furthermore if I want sweet tea I can even add sugar.

Thus there is no contradiction in the Qur'an when it says that man is created from sperm, dust and water. It is not a contradiction but a contradistinction. Contradistinction means speaking about two different concepts on the same subject without conflict. For instance if I say that the man is always truthful and a habitual liar, it is a contradiction, but if I say that a man is always honest, kind and loving, then it is a contradistinction.

13. ALLAH IS THE LORD OF TWO EASTS AND TWO WESTS

Question:

It is mentioned in one verse of the Qur'an that Allah is the Lord of two Easts and two Wests. How can you explain this verse of the Qur'an scientifically?

Answer:

1. Qur'an mentions Allah is the Lord of two Easts and two Wests

The verse of the Qur'an which refers to Allah being the Lord of two easts and two wests is the following verse from Surah Ar-Rahman:

“(He is) Lord of the two Easts and Lord of the two Wests:”

[Al-Qur'an 55:17]

In the original Arabic script, the words east and west have been used in the dual form. It implies that Allah is the Lord of two easts and two wests.

2. Allah is the Lord of both the extremes of East and West

The science of geography tells us that the sun rises from the east, but the point of sunrise keeps shifting throughout the year. Only on two days of the year known as ‘equinox’, does the sun rise exactly from due east. On the remaining days, it rises either from a little north or a little south of due east. During summer solstice the sun rises from one extreme of the east and during winter solstice it rises from the other extreme. Similarly, the sun sets in one extreme of the west in summer solstice. It sets in the other extreme of the west in winter solstice. This phenomenon can be easily seen in Bombay or any other city, by people living in certain areas, or in tall skyscraper buildings, from where the rising or setting of sun can be seen. They are able to

notice that during the summer solstice the sun rises from one extreme of east and during winter solstice it rises from the other extreme of east. In short, through out the year, the sun keeps rising from different points of the east and sets on different points of the west. Thus when the Qur'an refers to Allah as the Lord of two easts and two wests, it means that Allah is the Lord of both the extremes of east and both the extremes of west.

3. Allah is the Lord of all the points of the East and West

Arabic language has two types of plurals. One is the dual plural i.e. the plural that implies the existence of two. The other is the plural for more than two, i.e. three and above. In Surah Rahman verse 17 the Arabic words used are mashriqaini and magribaini which are in dual plural and therefore imply two easts and two wests.

Consider the following verse of the Qur'an:

“Now I do call to witness the Lord of all points in the East and the West.”

[Al-Qur'an 70:40]

The Arabic words for east and west used in this verse are mashaariqi and magharibi' which are plurals that imply the existence of more than two.

We can thus conclude that the Qur'an refers to Allah being the Lord of all the points in the east and all the points of the west, as well as the Lord of both the extreme points of east and both the extreme points of west.

14. ONE DAY IN THE SIGHT OF ALLAH IS 1,000 OR 50,000 YEARS

Question:

A particular verse of the Qur'an says that one day in the sight of Allah is equal to 1000 years. In another verse of the Qur'an it says that one day is equal to 50,000 years. Isn't the Qur'an contradicting itself?

Answer:

1. Time of Allah is incomparable to earthly time

The Qur'an says in two verses, (22:47 and 32:5), that the measure of one day in the sight of Allah is equal to 1,000 years of our reckoning. In another verse (70:4) it says that the measure of one day in the sight of Allah is equal to 50,000 years of our reckoning.

These verses generally mean that the time of Allah (swt) is incomparable to the earthly time. The examples given are of one thousand years and fifty thousand years of the earthly time. In other words thousands of years or a very, very long time of the earth a day in the sight of Allah is equal to:

2. Yaum also means Period

The Arabic word used in all these three verses is yaum, which, besides meaning a day also means a long period, or an epoch. If you translate the word yaum correctly as ‘period’ there will be no confusion.

a) The verse from Surah Hajj reads as:

“Yet they ask thee to hasten on the Punishment! but Allah will not fail in His promise. Verily a Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning”.

[Al-Qur’an 22:47]

When the unbelievers asked to hasten the punishment the Qur’an says Allah will not fail in His promise. Verily a period in the sight of Allah is like a thousand years of your reckoning.

b) The verse from Surah Al-Sajdah says:

“He rules (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth: in the end will (all affairs) go up? To Him, on a Day, the space whereof will be (as) a thousand years of your reckoning”.

[Al-Qur’an 32:5]

This verse indicates that a period required for all the affairs to go up to Allah (swt), is a thousand years of our reckoning.

c) A verse from Surah Al-Maarij says:

“The angels and the spirit ascend unto Him in a Day the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years”.

[Al-Qur’an 70:4]

This verse means that the period required for angels and the spirits to ascend unto Allah (swt) is fifty thousand years.

d) The period for two different acts need not be the same. For example the period required for me to travel to destination ‘A’ say Vashi is one hour and the period required for me to travel to destination ‘B’ i.e. Kashmir is 50 hours. This does not indicate that I am making two contradictory statements.

Thus the verses of the Qur’an not only do not contradict each other, they are also in perfect harmony with established modern scientific facts.

15. IBLIS – ANGEL OR JINN?

Question:

The Qur’an in several places says that Iblis was an angel, but in Surah Kahf it says that Iblis was a Jinn. Isn’t this a contradiction in the Qur’an?

Answer:

1. Incidence of Iblis and Angels mentioned in the Qur’an

The story of Adam and Iblis is mentioned in the Qur'an in various places in which Allah (swt) says, "We said to the angels bow down to Adam: and they bowed down: not so Iblis".

This is mentioned in:

Surah Al Baqarah chapter 2 verse 43

Surah Al 'Araf chapter 7 verse 17

Surah Al Hijr chapter 15 verses 28-31

Surah Al Isra chapter 17 verse 61

Surah Ta Ha chapter 20 verse 116

Surah Sad chapter 38 verses 71-74

But in Surah Al Kahf chapter 18 verse 50 the Qur'an says:

"Behold! We said to the angels, "Bow down to Adam." they bowed down except Iblis He was one of the Jinns."

[Al-Qur'an 18:50]

2. Arabic Rule Of Tagleeb

The English translation of the first part of the verse 'We said to the angels bow down to Adam: they bowed down except Iblis', gives us the impression that Iblis was an angel. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. In Arabic grammar there is a rule known as Tagleeb, according to which, if the majority is addressed, even the minority is included. If for example, I address a class containing 100 students of whom 99 are boys and one is a girl, and if I say in Arabic that the boys should stand up, it includes the girl as well. I need not mention her separately.

Similarly in the Qur'an, when Allah addressed the angels, even Iblis was present, but it is not required that he be mentioned separately. Therefore according to that sentence Iblis may be an angel or may not be an angel, but we come to know from Surah Al Kahf chapter 18 verse 50 that Iblis was a Jinn. No where does the Qur'an say Iblis was an angel. Therefore there is no contradiction in the Qur'an.

3. Jinns have free will and can disobey Allah

Secondly, Jinns have a free will and may or may not obey Allah, but angels have no free will and always obey Allah. Therefore the question of an angel disobeying Allah does not arise. This further supplements that Iblis was a Jinn and not an angel.

16. AUTHOR OF THE QUR'AN DOES NOT KNOW MATHEMATICS

Question:

According to Arun Shourie there is a mathematical error in the Qur'an. In chapter 4 verses 11 and 12 when you add up the different parts of inheritance given to the heirs, it is more than one. Therefore the author of the Qur'an does not know mathematics.

Answer:

The Qur'an mentions about inheritance in many places, in

Surah Al Baqarah chapter 2 verse 180

Surah Al Baqarah chapter 2 verse 240

Surah Al Nisa chapter 4 verses 7 to 9

Surah Al Nisa chapter 4 verses 19 and 33

Surah Al Ma'idah chapter 5 verses 105 and 108

Regarding the share of inheritance it is clearly given in Surah Nisa chapter 4 verse 11, 12 and 176.

Let us examine the verses quoted by Arun Shourie, i.e. Surah Nisa chapter 4 verses 11 and 12:

“Allah (swt) (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half.

For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers (or sisters) the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained by Allah; and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

“In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child; but if they leave child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what ye leave, their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts.”
[Al-Qur'an 4:11-12]

Islam explains the law of inheritance in great detail. The broad and basic outline is given in the Qur'an and the minute details are given in the Ahadith i.e. the tradition and sayings of the Prophet (pbuh).

A person can spend his full life only on the research of the Islamic law of inheritance with its various permutations and combinations. Arun Shourie expects to know the law only by superficially reading two verses of the Qur'an without knowing the criteria.

It is similar to a person who wants to solve a mathematical equation but does not know the basic rule of mathematics, i.e. BODMAS which says that in a mathematical equation, irrespective of which mathematical sign appears first, you will first solve BODMAS: 1st Brackets Off, 2nd Division, 3rd Multiplication, 4th Addition and 5th Subtraction. If Arun Shourie does not know mathematics and first does multiplication then subtraction, then brackets off, then division and finally addition, the answer that he will obtain is bound to be wrong.

Similarly, when the Qur'an mentions the law of inheritance in Surah Nisa chapter 4 verses 11 and 12, even though the children's share is mentioned first and then that of the parents and spouses, according to the law of inheritance in Islam after paying off the debts and liabilities first, the share is given to the spouses and the parents depending on whether the deceased has left children or not, and whatever portion of wealth is remaining is divided between the sons and the daughters according to their respective shares.

So where does the question arise of the total coming to more than one? So it is not Allah who does not know mathematics but it is Arun Shourie himself who is ignorant about mathematics.

17. IS ALLAH FORGIVING OR REVENGEFUL?

Question:

The Qur'an says several times that Allah is most Merciful and Forgiving but also says many times that He gives severe punishment. Is He Forgiving or Revengeful?

Answer:

1. Allah is most Merciful

The Qur'an says several times that Allah is the most Merciful. In fact all the 114 Surahs i.e. chapters of the Glorious Qur'an except for Surah Taubah chapter 9, begin with the beautiful formula, Bismillah-hir-Rahman-nir-Rahim, which means, "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful".

2. Allah is Forgiving

The Glorious Qur'an mentions in several verses including Surah Nisa, chapter 4 verse 25 and Surah Maidah, chapter 5 verse 74:

"And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

3. Allah gives severe punishment to the deserving

Allah besides being Merciful and Forgiving is also strict in giving punishment to the deserving. The Qur'an mentions in several verses that Allah will give severe punishment to the unbelievers and rejecters of faith. He will give punishment to all those who disobey Him. Several verses of the Qur'an describe the various types of severe punishment that Allah will give in hell to all those who disobey.

"Those who reject our Signs, we shall soon cast into the Fire; as often as their skins

Are roasted through, we shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise".

[Al-Qur'an 4:56]

4. Allah is Just

The question is, whether Allah is forgiving or revengeful? An important point to be noted is that Allah besides being Merciful and Forgiving, He also has to give severe punishment to the deserving wicked or evil people, because He is also Just. The Qur'an mentions in Surah Nisa: "Allah is never unjust in the least degree".

[Al-Qur'an 4:40]

It is further mentioned in Surah Al-Ambiya:

"We shall set up scales of justice for the day of Judgement, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, we will bring it (to account): and enough are we to take account".

[Al-Qur'an 21:47]

5. Example: Teacher forgives a student who copies in the examination

If during an examination, a student copies and the teacher who supervises in the examination catches the student red-handed, the teacher says that he is very merciful and kind and forgives him and allows him to continue copying. Those students who have worked hard for the examination will not call the teacher merciful and kind but will call him unjust. This merciful act of the teacher will encourage the other students to also copy. If all the teachers are merciful and kind and allow the students to copy then no student will ever study for examinations and all will pass with flying colours by copying. The theoretical results of the examinations will be excellent in which all the students will pass with first class and distinction but practically these students will be a failure in life. The whole purpose of the examination would be defeated.

6. This Life is a Test for the Hereafter

The life in this world is a test for the Hereafter. The Qur'an says in Surah Al Mulk: "He who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving".

[Al-Qur'an 67:2]

7. If Allah forgives all and punishes none, who will obey him?

If Allah (swt) forgives each and every human being and punishes no one, then why should the human beings obey the command of Allah (swt)? I do agree that no one will go to hell, but this world would become hell to live in. If all human beings are going to go to heaven then what is the purpose and use of the human beings to come to this world, this life cannot be called a test for the hereafter.

8. Allah only forgives if a person repents

Allah (swt) only forgives if a person repents. The Qur'an says in Surah Al-Zumar, chapter 39 verse 53-55:

“Say: ‘O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

“Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (will), before the penalty comes on you – after that ye shall not be helped.”

“And follow the best of (the courses) revealed to you from your Lord, before the penalty comes on you – of a sudden, while ye perceive not!”

[Al-Qur’an 39:53-55]

There are four criteria for repentance: First, agree that the act is wrong. Secondly, stop it immediately. Thirdly, never do it again in future. And lastly, compensate for the loss if caused to anyone.